



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Report to the Legislature

AN ACT Relating to Fiscal Matters

Chapter 276, Laws of 2004

SHB 2459

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An Act Relating to Fiscal Matters
Collaboration Report

Introduction

The state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) works with other child and family serving systems to maintain a public child welfare system. The ultimate goal of the child welfare system is to connect vulnerable kids and families to the right service at the right time to meet both short-term and long-term needs for safety and well-being. This includes critical work to sustain family and cultural connections, reunify families whenever possible, and identify permanent homes for children when reunification is not possible.

Children served by Children's Administration experience improvement in their lives through services provided to the child and his or her family. Service options must be available to meet the varied needs of children and their families. Community service providers are an important part of having timely, appropriate, and effective services for children served by the Children's Administration.

To achieve and sustain excellence in Washington's child welfare system all partners in the system; Children's Administration, members of the judiciary, guardians ad litem, legal representatives, Tribes, foster parents, extended family members, and community service providers need to work together and support each other.

This report is submitted in response to the proviso in SHB 2459, the 2004 supplemental budget bill requiring the Children's Administration to develop recommended policies and protocols for collaboration with community based agencies.

The Collaboration Proviso provided the following:

Children's Administration shall convene regional and local department staff and community based agency staff to develop recommended policies and protocols concerning collaborative decision making, including contracting, referrals, and resource allocation. Children's Administration shall submit these recommendations to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2004.

As a result of proviso, Children's Administration convened state and local collaboration committees to consider a framework for

collaboration in decision making, planning, and communications for CA and its service providers. A copy of the Statewide Collaboration Protocols is attached to this report as Attachment A.

Development of the Collaboration Protocols

At the recommendation of the statewide collaboration workgroup, neutral facilitators assisted in the meetings both at the statewide and regional levels. The facilitators from the Child Welfare League of America assisted the workgroup. The facilitators were funded by a grant from the Medina Foundation awarded to Catalyst for Kids in partnership with Children's Administration. The statewide workgroup met several times beginning in July 2004 and ending in March 2005. Community services providers, CA management and staff was actively engaged in these facilitated meetings.

By early 2005 a great deal of Children's Administration time and attention had been devoted to regional and statewide meetings regarding principles of collaboration. As a result of those meetings, a protocol framework was developed. Unfortunately, management concerns within Children's Administration necessitated a change in leadership and reprioritization of the administrations time and attention. Development work on the protocols was delayed.

On March 27, 2006, a small work group consisting of providers and Children's Administration staff, convened without a facilitator to review the proposed statewide protocols. On April 4, 2006, proposed protocols were sent to the statewide collaboration workgroup for comments and further suggestions.

The statewide collaboration protocols focus on four main areas of collaboration: planning, decision-making, communication and evaluation, as they relate to referrals, contracts and resource allocations.

- Planning – Collaborative planning will occur in four areas:
 - Strategic Direction;
 - Array of Services;
 - Policy and Budget Decisions and
 - Continuous Quality Improvement
- Decision making - Children's Administration decision processes will address the following:

- Decisions made collaboratively by Children's Administration and providers
- Decisions made by Children's Administration with input from providers
- Decisions made by Children's Administration and communicated to providers
- Communication – Communication is a critical component of any collaboration effort and the statewide protocols outline in detail how communication will be addressed between Children's Administration and its service partners by covering the following:
 - The type of information to be communicate;
 - How that information will be communicated
 - When information is communicated; and
 - Party responsible for the communication
- Evaluation - The evaluation process will assess the degree to which these collaboration protocols have been implemented and the impact of implementation on planning, decision-making, and communication.

Collaboration Activities

While the statewide collaboration protocols were being finalized, Children's Administration undertook a contract review process and put into action many of the principles outlined in the collaboration protocols. The contract review activities included:

- Convening groups of community service providers and Children's Administration staff to discuss the services offered under each contract type to determine what changes if any should be made to the contracts
- Reviewing 928 contracts and with the community service providers implementing the following contract changes:
 - Contracts clearly outline the exact services that will be provided
 - Payments are based on a fee-for-service or on a monthly invoice tied to a detailed budget in the contract

- Planning for and implementing in July 2006 performance based contracts so information is available on how children's lives improve as a result of the services offered
- Over the next year, improving business practices in contracts and providing better service options, such as an improved alternative response to child abuse investigations

Next Steps

The Statewide Workgroup will be convened during July of 2006 to develop a process to operationalize the protocols. The Workgroup will also review service and budget issues.

Conclusion

The protocols provide a foundation for consistent methods of collaboration and communication between Children's Administration and its service partners. The statewide protocols should assist Children's Administration and its service partners in addressing broader issues and encouraging broader communication and collaboration across the state. The Statewide Planning Committee created by the collaboration protocols should benefit the Washington child welfare system by providing a mechanism for Children's Administration and its partners to assess the current service array and identify service gaps.

The Children's Administration extends its sincere thanks to the numerous people who give their time, energy, and expertise to the process of developing the attached collaboration protocols.

Enclosure

Department of Social & Health Services
Children's Administration
Statewide Protocols for Collaboration with Service Providers

PREAMBLE

Children's Administration Values, Commitments, and Principles

We partner with Tribes and communities to serve children and families.

We value partnerships with Tribes, communities, and public and private agencies to promote safe and healthy growth and development of children in their own homes and in out-of-home placement.

We encourage open communication, and we work with partners to resolve issues.

We strive to make decisions openly, with as much consultation and shared decision-making as possible.¹

We support federally and non-federally recognized tribes and off-reservation American Indian and Alaska Native organizations and their rights to provide for and nurture their own children.

Guiding Principles of Collaboration between CA and Service Partners

Private sector service partners, Tribes, and public agencies are mutually valued participants in the child welfare service delivery system, and their collaboration is critical to developing, funding, and evaluating services delivered to children and families. Guiding principles for state-level collaboration protocols are outlined below.

In each area where it is appropriate, collaboration in planning and decision-making should:

- Be based on shared goals and expectations
- Reflect regional and local priorities and contexts
- Involve as many different types of stakeholders as possible, including consumers and other community members
- Recognize the shared responsibility of the public and private sectors to define their roles

¹ Nothing in these protocols should be interpreted or construed as limiting or superseding CA's management responsibilities or decision-making authority. These protocols provide a framework for CA's partners to inform its decisions through collaboration.

- Engage providers in the decision-making process, and clarify their roles
- Create a culture in which it is valued and safe to raise issues or propose new approaches
- Promote effective ongoing communication among:
 - service partners
 - state, regional and local CA offices
 - children and families receiving services.
- Include mechanisms to anticipate and resolve crises
- Be data-driven, evidence-based, and results-oriented
- Use objective measures of performance and success, and provide feedback
- Extend across a range of activities

In keeping with the purpose and spirit the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Policy 7.01, CA is committed to consultation with Federally Recognized Tribes of Washington, recognized American Indian Organization, and individual American Indians and Alaska Natives in the planning of services and programs, to ensure quality and comprehensive service delivery to all American Indian and Alaska Natives in Washington State.

These principles and commitments provide the foundation on which CA's protocols are based.

I. Goals of Collaboration

Goals of collaboration between CA and its service partners include:

- Mutually supportive working relationships
- Coordinated delivery of services to families and children
- A sustainable continuum of accessible services for children, youth, and families
- Shared accountability for results
- Cost-effective and efficient use of available resources.

II. Resolution of Relationship Issues**A. Purpose**

Contractual issues or disputes are resolved in accordance with the terms of the specific contract. Relationship issues are matters (questions, concerns, disagreements) that are not within scope of the contractual terms between service partner(s) and CA. These issues include, but are not limited to, matters related to performance measures and referral processes. A system to address relationship issues is important to the creation and maintenance of a culture where service providers feel safe to raise issues or propose new approaches.

B. The Process

1. Issues must first be raised at the regional level following the designated regional process for resolution of non-contract relationship issues if any. In the event that no regional process has been designated for these issues, issues will be raised following the regional chain of command.
2. If resolution has not been achieved after using the process set forth above, the issue(s) will be raised by a letter or memorandum outlining the issues and forwarded to the director of field operations.
3. CA headquarters will work with the service partner(s) to resolve the issue. If resolution cannot be achieved, the issue will be forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration.
4. Decisions will be documented in a letter/memo and will be provided to all parties involved.

III. Collaboration in Planning

A. Purpose

Collaborative planning, preventive problem-solving, and information-sharing are essential for both CA and its service partners. The following framework recognizes the importance of collaboration in the planning process.

B. The Mechanism

CA and its service partners will convene a Statewide Planning Committee² (SPC) which will be a primary mechanism for collaboration in planning by CA and its service partners. It will be comprised of 25-30 members who represent CA, its service partners, tribes, and other stakeholders.

1. SPC Membership

Committee membership will reflect service partners from both eastern and western Washington, from urban and rural communities, and from all major contracted program areas. Members of the SPC will include:

- a. a CA representative, a service provider, and stakeholder from each region;
- b. two representatives appointed by the Indian Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC);
- c. Other CA staff and stakeholders appointed by the Assistant Secretary.

2. SPC Meetings

- a. SPC meetings shall be open meetings. The SPC will meet annually. Annual meetings may be held at various locations around the state to allow for maximum participation of service partners.
- b. At its first meeting SPC may consider regional protocols and make recommendations to CA regarding the adoption of working documents or draft outlines of regional collaboration protocols.
- c. The SPC may meet on an ad-hoc basis and create sub-committees that will work together as needed to address issues and situations that arise throughout the year and require the input and collaboration of committee members.
- d. Ad-hoc meetings of the SPC and meetings of smaller sub-committees may be conducted in any way agreed to by the SPC or sub-committee

3. Selection and Duties of Co-Chairs

² The SPC shall supplement, not duplicate or supersede the Children, Youth and Family Services Advisory Committee established pursuant to RCW 74.13.031.

The SPC will select two co-chairs to share the responsibility of leadership. One co-chair will be a representative from CA and the other will be a representative from a partner agency. The co-chairs will have joint responsibility for the following:

- a. Gathering input from SPC members and developing an agenda based on their input
- b. Determining logistics and locations of meeting(s)
- c. Convening and leading meetings
- d. Keeping and distributing records of the meetings
- e. Obtaining staff support resources necessary to facilitate the work of the SPC.

D. Areas of SPC Advice

SPC will, in collaboration with CA, provide guidance and strategic advice in the following areas. SPC may, as needed, invite participation of individuals with specialized knowledge to help address specific tasks or topics that require in-depth expertise.

1. Strategic direction—reviewing major trends in child welfare, learning about what is working and what is not working, and recommending where CA and its partner service agencies might go with their policies and programs.

2. Array of services—SPC may review the capacity and accessibility of current services and recommending changes.

3. Policy and budget decisions—SPC may make recommendations on the design or modification contracts between CA and providers, determining referral processes, discussion of overall budget allocations for service and program areas, and developing coordinated grant-writing strategies.

4. Continuous quality improvement—SPC may make recommendations regarding the development of processes for measuring customer satisfaction (including service partners) and assessing the effectiveness of services and programs, as well as examining the results of CA reviews and contract outcome measures and recommending improvements

IV. Collaboration in Decision-making³

A. Purpose

Children's Administration and its service partners are committed to achieving collaborative decision-making—even at the implementation stage. CA will work with providers to identify all opportunities for collaboration, to determine the potential impact of pending decisions, and whenever possible, to develop strategies to minimize negative impact on

³ Please see footnote 1.

CA's service partners. In some cases, time constraints may prevent consideration from all partners. In other cases, decisions may be shaped by external forces.

B. Children's Administration's Decision Processes

1. At times, CA will make decisions that are exclusively its responsibility, such as when it is required to take actions to comply with decisions mandated by the Governor, the Washington Legislature, the federal government, or the courts.
2. Decisions made by CA with input from providers. These are decisions that CA is responsible for making after receiving input from its service partners on their preferences and the likely impact of various options.
3. Decisions made collaboratively by CA and providers. These are situations when CA and service partners will decide, using consensus-building processes, the best direction or decision regarding a particular issue or topic.

Notification Regarding Decisions

The following protocols will be followed to engage participants, communicate the nature of issues, and ensure timely notification for all partners.

1. CA will use existing collaboration structures to notify that decisions need to be made and engage service partners, including the SPC, regional planning committees, and providers or committees organized by program area.
2. CA will notify applicable partners that 1) their participation is needed, 2) their input is needed or 3) that a decision has been made through e-mail or other reasonable methods. Service partners will be notified as early as possible. At a minimum, partners will be provided with:
 - Explanation of the topic or issue
 - Applicable Timeframes
 - Specific opportunities for participation or input (Meeting type, date, time, and location, or other type of communication)
 - Deadline for CA to receive input, when applicable
 - Information on where input should be sent
 - Indication of how service partner input will be used.
3. When partners collaborate with CA in the decision-making process, the decision making process may occur in person, by a conference call, by e-mail, or by listserv discussion, depending on the type of decision, the timeframes allowed, and the needs of the committee or group involved.
4. Final decisions will be communicated by e-mail or a letter outlining the decision and its basis. Other communication options may be used if the situation warrants.

V. Collaborative Communication

A. Purpose

Communication is a critical component of any collaboration effort. This section of the protocols outlines communications CA and its service partners.

1. CA will provide its service partners with information concerning current or future decisions that affect providers; Funding opportunities; Referral mechanisms; Program initiatives; and Contract modifications. CA will communicate information of interest or information on decisions or changes that may affect service partners as timely as possible.
2. Service partners will provide CA Information concerning current or future decisions that affect CA; Funding opportunities; new services or program initiatives; any initiative or change that involves CA staff or children receiving services from CA. Service partners will communicate information of interest or information on decisions or changes that may affect CA as timely as possible.
3. Methods for Communication between CA and its service providers include:
 - a. **Meetings**—Regular meetings of the SPC will be held annually. Additional meetings of the SPC or of subcommittees will be convened on an ad-hoc basis to share information and work on issues that arise outside of the annual committee meeting.
 - b. **By e-mail, memorandum, or letter**—E-mail may be used to share general information, provide notification of meetings, and to send documents to the SPC for review or to solicit feedback. Letters and memos may be used to provide written confirmation of decisions, agreements and other more formal business correspondence. Any initiative substantially affecting CA or CA service providers that has not been developed collaboratively will be communicated to the affected providers in writing as soon as possible.
 - c. **Website**—CA has created a "Business Partners" webpage to communicate with partners. (www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/partners/info.asp)
 - d. **Listserv**—CA is reviewing the feasibility of using a listserv for communication with the SPC and with contractors by program area.
4. Responsibility for disseminating information will vary depending on the type of information being shared.
 - a. CA decisions or changes affecting service providers will be communicated by the Assistant Secretary or a designee of the Assistant Secretary.
 - b. Decisions or changes by services partners that may affect CA will be communicated via their own internal processes to the appropriate statewide or regional collaboration structure.

VI. Evaluating the Collaboration

A. Purpose

The evaluation process will assess the degree to which these collaboration protocols have been implemented and the impact of implementation.

1. The collaboration protocols should be assessed using both qualitative and quantitative indicators and measures. These should focus on: timeliness of decisions, inclusion of service partners, follow-through and follow-up of planning decisions—both the decisions themselves and communication.
2. Measures should be ongoing and occur more often initially to ensure progress. Pre- and post-measures and assessments of collaboration should also occur to monitor improvements.
3. CA will investigate the option of using non-CA research staff (including research and data analysis staff elsewhere in DSHS) to develop measures and tools. The SPC will also consider a small, on-going subcommittee to assist in evaluating the collaboration efforts.
4. Evaluation should occur after one complete contracting cycle. A follow-up evaluation should be conducted a minimum of two years from initial implementation.

B. Protocol Revision

Based on the results of the ongoing statewide evaluation process, the SPC will review activities and protocols annually and recommend revisions as needed to CA.